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## **AFFLICTIONS**



THE  
ADVANTAGE OF AFFLICTIONS

BY  
BAHAR-UD-DIN AHMED

*Author of An Ode on The Delhi Coronation Durbar, 1903  
The Broken Toy etc*

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TO  
THE HON'BLE MR. PERCY COMYN LYON,  
C S. I, I C S

THIS  
LITTLE VOLUME

IS  
BY PERMISSION  
RESPECTFULLY

DEDICATED

AS

A TOKEN  
OF  
ESTEEM & GRATITUDE.

**" METALS ARE TRIED IN THE FIRE, AND ACCEPTABLE  
MEN IN THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTIONS "**

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## PREFACE.

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IN my attempts to soothe the wound caused by the death of my only son, a beautiful and promising lad of 18, I vainly sought human help. My mind became, in no time, a regular volcano which began to vomit flames of the fire of grief, and emit torrents of the lava of distractions, which dimmed my sight, deafened my ears and made my heart quite a desert, and, in utter hopelessness, I plunged myself into the deep of devotional writings, as the only place of safety. Fortunately for me, the immersion not only alleviated my miseries, but had a healthy effect on my mind which was almost unhinged, as it soon became a haven of perfect peace.

I sat, for full fifteen months, at the feet of Thomas à Kempis and other illustrious men who are now immortal in heaven. I sought them in seclusion, and my seeking was not in vain. They gave me what the world could not—they infused into my heart

a soothing balm which restored it to a healthy state, and poured into my mind's eye a fluid that not only improved my sight but removed, from my field of vision, the barrier we call death. I am now in elysian felicity, not only in the company of my own boy, but also in that of all who have preceded him to that happier land where there is no sorrow.

To enjoy such happiness, alone, in the midst of the sufferings of fellow-men, is, to say the least of it, selfish. I would, therefore, offer to those who might need it, a portion of what I have gained, in the shape of the following few pages containing the instructions of the immortal Kempis, a perusal of which will not only enlighten their minds, but will also lift their souls, above dogmatic teaching, to the spiritual heights of true devotees

I may note that in order to make the instructions acceptable to the general reader I have thought it necessary to omit from them a good deal of controversial matter

CHITTAGONG,

*June 1909.*

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B. A.

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# THE ADVANTAGE OF AFFLICTIONS.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE MISERABLE CONDITION OF MAN.

Wretched thou art, O man, wheresoever thou art, wretched thou must be which way soever thou turnest thyself beset on all sides, with miseries without remedy, without any possibility of escape by human helps, and only to be avoided by taking sanctuary in God. Why then art thou disquieted at crosses and disappointments, when these are the portion of all mankind? It is not yours or mine alone, but the greatest, the best men, drink of the bitter cup and no man ever lived in uninterrupted happiness: none ever succeeded in all his wishes and attempts, none ever was above calamities, or free from vexation of spirit. Since, therefore, so ordained it is that all must suffer and be miserable, are all equally so? No, there are different conditions and degrees of suffering, and his is certainly the best and most comfortable who is called and disposed to suffer for the sake of God and a good conscience.



It is usual for men who know no better to envy and admire the rich, the great, the honourable, to imagine that princes and persons of plentiful fortunes are completely happy. But this is the effect of great weakness and inconsideration. If, therefore, we would rectify such mistaken apprehensions, let us get a right notion of spiritual and heavenly advantages. These will convince us of what poor account all worldly enjoyments should be in our esteem, how very little, how mere a nothing they are, how hard and hazardous to be attained, how uncertain the preservation of them, and how full of trouble and anxious care even while we have them. And who would be fond of that which can neither be got nor lost, no, nor kept neither without fear and sorrow and perpetual solicitude? Surely then the happiness of man does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. 'Tis senseless and absurd to think it can. And if no proportion of worldly goods, though ever so large, can exempt us from misery, then a competent measure of them ought to satisfy us. For, miserable we must be with less or more. The very living here, upon earth, without any additional calamity, would make us inevitably so. The more a man desires and labours to be like God, the less agreeable relish he hath of life, because he is so much more sensible, more thoroughly convinced, of the frailty and corruption of human nature. For what is this vicissitude, this

daily round of eating and drinking, sleeping and waking, weariness and rest, and the many other necessities which the condition of mortality enslaves us to ? Doubtless it is a mighty burthen and affliction to men whose minds are wholly fixed upon higher things, and whose only ambition it is to get above sin and infirmity

For, the distresses and wants of the outward man are sore hindrance and great oppression to the inward and we shall not perhaps injure David's sense by supposing even these included in that petition where he begs of God to "deliver him out of his troubles" But wretched are they indeed who are not sensible of their wretchedness, and yet more so still are those vain people who are even in love with it, who dote upon this mortal life which exposes them to it, and cannot think of parting with it at any rate, even when in such uncomfortable circumstances that all their time and care are scarce sufficient to furnish them with provisions necessary for the support of it. And yet these infatuated creatures are content to lay themselves out upon toil and trouble, and, might they but be suffered to continue here for ever, could dispense with any concern for God and goodness, and willingly forego the hopes and everlasting happiness of a heavenly kingdom

O foolish and slow of heart to understand and believe your true interest, how deep are you immersed in flesh and sense ! How sottishly deluded with

dress, and fond of vanities which cannot profit ! Have you no notion left of any thing but body ? No regard for a future enduring substance ? Rouse your affections up to nobler enjoyments, and disengage them from those gross, those empty objects, which if you still persist in the love and pursuit of, you will one day be taught by sad experience how poor and despicable they really are, and how unworthy of all that eager concern you have thrown away upon them. Be persuaded then by reason and religion, and do not provoke God to convince you, by torments and too late remorse, of how fatal consequence the love of this world is to all that are immoderately fond of it. View with those illustrious patterns of mortification and heavenly-mindedness, which the primitive saints and favourites of God have set you. These great good men had small regard for the pleasures of sense and glittering gaieties of this world, but kept their eyes and hearts intent upon eternal joys. Those wore their hope, their delight, the earnest and only longing of their souls and, therefore, the only one, lest if their affections were at all divided, the love of the things that are seen should fasten down their hearts to mean and earthly objects, and hinder them from soaring up high to the infinitely more precious things that are not seen.

This is indeed a work of pains and time, but let not that consideration drive you to despair of attaining a heavenly temper of mind. The under-

taking is great, 'tis true, and the time allowed for it but short, but still this short space is enough, if you will take care to make the best of it Up then, and be doing, do not purpose well to-day, and put off the execution to a further day, but rather argue yourself into action by such reflections as these This very instant is the proper time, this the season of amendment, and fighting the good fight It is by hardship and suffering that men recommend themselves to the acceptance and favour of God He hath ordained that fire and water, distress and tribulation, should be the way that leads to refreshment and true bliss Without some violence upon thyself, sin cannot be subdued, nor evil customs broken Without some uneasiness and pain we cannot live, and while we carry this body of flesh about us, these will make an inseparable part of the burthen. We wish indeed for ease and untroubled satisfaction, but, as the condition of mankind stands at present, we wish in vain For, in losing the innocence of our nature, we lost our happiness too, and, as both left us, so both must be restored together. Patience is now become a necessary virtue, and we must be content to await the season of God's mercy, when He shall fully repair our breaches, heal our infirmities, put a period to our unrighteousness, absolve the guilt, blot out the remembrance of them, and cause mortality to be swallowed up of life.

In the meantime it cannot, methinks, but be a mighty mortification to consider how exceeding prone this frail nature of ours is to sin, to-day you confess your sins to God, and to-morrow you act those very sins over again which you lamented but the day before. This hour you resolve to be watchful, and take good heed to all your ways, and the very next hour you run on as giddily and rashly as ever, forget your resolution, and stand more self-condemned than if you had never resolved at all. So, great reason is there for thinking very meanly of ourselves and disclaiming all vain confidences in anything we are or do. But these so sudden and frequent relapses are not our misfortunes, but our faults. They are indeed the consequence of our frailty, but that frailty would not affect us to that degree, did not we contribute to it by our own negligence and inconstancy. And a small neglect will soon undo what cost much time and labour to effect, nay, what could not have been effected even so neither, had not Almighty God seconded our endeavours with His divine assistance.

But if we cool so very quickly, and “cannot watch one hour,” what will become of us at last, and how shall we persevere in faithfulness unto the end? Wretched are we indeed if we faint and grow weary, if we give out and seek refreshment, as if we were already safe and in absolute peace, when we have scarce begun the battle, and gained but little

ground in holiness and reformation of manners. Alas ! we are as yet but raw beginners , so far from complete masters in our business, that we have still need to learn and practise the very first rules of living over again, before we can be so perfect as we wish and ought to be Nor should we disdain to do so, if those condescensions can prove of use to us

## CHAPTER II.

### INORDINATE AFFECTION.

The moment a man cherishes any inordinate desire he feels a tempest rising in his soul. Pride and covetousness never suffer us to rest, but the poor and lowly in heart, the humble and the contented, enjoy themselves in a profound and perpetual calm. He that is still in conflict with his passions, and hath not yet attained a complete victory over them, is easily tempted, and often find himself overborne by things not worth his concern. For, the remains of a carnal spirit, and the strong tendencies to pleasures of sense, will not suffer a man, without great difficulty, to draw his mind from worldly affections. And therefore, while he is endeavouring to do this, he endeavours it with sore travail and pain, commits a violence upon himself, and is provoked to anger and indignation against all that opposes him in so laborious an undertaking.

But if he indulge in those desires, and succeed in them, the consequence, is worse this way than the other. For, then he is strong with remorse for his guilty compliance, and discontented to find that gratifying his inclination does not yield the satisfaction he promised himself from it. This convinces him by sad experience that true peace and content

are never to be had by obeying his appetites, but by an obstinate resistance of them. And such peace cannot be expected in the breast of any sensual man, for, it is the peculiar portion and happiness of a soul raised above the world, a zealous and devout, a mortified and refined, and heavenly disposition of spirit.



## CHAPTER III

### MEDITATIONS CONCERNING DEATH

Since life is of short and uncertain continuance, it highly concerns you to look about you and take good heed how you employ it. To-day the man is vigorous and gay and flourishing, and to-morrow he is cut down, withered and gone. A very little time carries him out of our sight, and a very little more, out of our remembrance. O the hardness of men's hearts! O the wretched stupidity that fixes their whole thought and care upon the present, and will not be prevailed with to look before them, or bear any regard to that which must come hereafter! Whereas, in truth, every work and word and thought ought to be so ordered as if it were to be our last, and we instantly to die and render an account of it. Could we entertain ourselves more with the thoughts of death, it would be less a terror to us, for, in proportion as our lives amend, our fears will abate, and a clear conscience will enable us to meet death with undaunted courage. However flesh and frailty may impose upon us, yet be assured 'tis greater wisdom to be afraid of sinning than to be afraid of dying, a greater blessing to preserve our innocence than to prolong our lives. And whence is all this fear and anxiety? It is because we are

not fit to die But if you are not fit to-day, how do you propose to be so to-morrow ? Alas ! to-morrow is uncertain , neither you, nor I, nor any man can depend upon it Or if we could, yet what does it avail to live, though it were much longer, when we by longer living, grow so little better ? Assure yourself, long life is far from being always a blessing Too many (God knows) are so far from growing holier as they grow older, that the number of their days only adds to the number of their sins, and renders their account more heavy hereafter.

Happy is the man who can comfort himself with having employed any one day of his life so perfectly well as he might and ought to have done Many reckon up the years of their conversion with great satisfaction and think it a mighty matter that they have so long abandoned the world and a vicious course, and yet, when the time they boast of comes to be compared with the improvements they have made, how shamefully little is the good they have done ! If dying now be terrible, remember that living longer may be dangerous , and many, many a man finds too great occasion to wish that it had pleased God to take him away sooner. Happy, therefore, is he who keeps the hour of death constantly in view ; and from this prospect of what must come, takes care to reconcile himself to it, and to put his soul into a proper temper for it when it does come.

If you attend, at any time, a death-bed, and see another in his parting agonies, consider that this friend is gone the same way where you must shortly follow him. In the morning, question whether you may live till night, and when night comes, do not too confidently promise yourself another morning. Thus shall you be in a constant expectation, and in a good disposition to die. And be sure so to live always that death may never overtake you unprovided, nor its suddenest approach be sudden and surprising in respect of you. Many are snatched away in an instant, and die when they were not in the least aware of it. Let not the preparation, I am advising, be neglected as a melancholy unpleasant thing such as embitters life and damps men's present enjoyment, for, be assured whatever satisfaction you may take now, when that last hour draws on, it will give you quite other notions of the matter. And the reflections upon your past improvidence and neglect will be more bitter and afflicting then, than any the most solicitous forecast for dying well, can possibly be in the meantime.

O how wise, how happy is that man, who makes it his daily care to be such while he liveth, as he desires to be found when he comes to die! We may cherish a good hope and great assurance of leaving the world to our comfort and infinite advantage, if, while we continue in it, we can bring our-

selves to neglect, and despise it ; if we be zealous to improve in virtue, in love with discipline and mortification , if we attend to the exercise of repentance , if we be of an humble and obedient disposition , content to deny ourselves, and ready to undergo any hardship for God's sake. But if these qualifications be necessary, they are necessary to be attained in health. For, then a man is in a condition to strive and to exert himself, but when sickness is upon him, it is a great question what he will be able to do or whether any thing at all. Whatever the generality of the world may imagine who put off this great work till such improper seasons, yet sure it is that few, but very few, are reformed by a sick-bed. And they who defer their repentance and amendment till then, seldom alas ! repent as they ought, or are amended in good earnest.

Depend not upon the assistance of your relation and acquaintance, nor cherish an imagination so vain as that their prayers hereafter can effect what you never endeavoured to effect here. These can do you no service, but if they could, yet, when once gone, you will be forgotten much sooner than you are willing to believe. And why should you rest upon their care, when you cannot be prevailed with your own ? Can it be supposed they should be more concerned for your salvation, than you whose proper interest it is ? Allowing, then, that these could do you good, yet even thus 'tis better you should do

your own business, better, in regard of the person, and better in regard of the time for *now* is the season of acceptance, *now* is the day of salvation And, therefore, t<sup>h</sup>is moment is the fitter for your purpose; the sooner you change the better, live then while you may, and begin from the present minute to live, so that you may live for ever. For, if you suffer the happy opportunity to slip through your hands, you will wish for it afterwards, when it is too late, and you may perhaps be reduced to such circumstances, that one day, one hour, for making your peace with God may not be obtained, no, not when you would gladly give, were it at your disposal, the whole world to purchase it

Consider then, my friend, consider what a risk you run by your delays, think, what misery and danger, what confusion and despair it is now in your power to prevent, by living like a man that remembers he must die And, therefore, so spend every hour, that when your last draws on, you may receive it with joy and hope, instead of fear and astonishment Learn *now* to die daily, to die to sin and the world, that you may then begin to live with God Learn *now* to despise all here below, that you may then be disengaged, and at perfect liberty to leave all and follow God. Subdue your body *now* by mortification and self-denial, and you shall then have great boldness in the day of tribulation.

Does any confidence of long life encourage you

to defer putting this good advice in execution speedily? Nay, but reflect, fond man, how little you can promise yourself one poor single day. How many instances have you before your eyes, or fresh in your remembrance, of persons miserably deluded and disappointed in this hope, and hurried out of the body without any warning at all? How often have you been surprised with the news of this friend being run through, another drowned in crossing the water, a third breaking his neck by a fall, a fourth fallen down dead at table or choked with his meat, a fifth seized with apoplexy at play, a sixth burnt in his bed, a seventh murdered, an eighth killed by thieves, a ninth struck with lightning or blasting or pestilence, a tenth swallowed up in an earthquake? Such vast variety of deaths surrounds us, and so fleeting a shadow is the life of man!

And if any of these happens to be your case, who shall help, who can save you, when the precious opportunity is fled and lost? Be doing, then, betimes, for though you cannot guess as to the hour or manner of your own death, yet safe you are, or may be, if you will provide against it. Use time, then, while you have it; make haste to be rich towards God, and let religion and your own salvation be your chief, your only concern. Make yourself friends while you may, who, when you fail, may receive you into everlasting habitations.

Behave yourself as a stranger and pilgrim upon

earth and entangle not your thoughts in matters which do not belong to you. For sojourners are not proprietors, and, therefore, such should keep their minds loose and free, and not settle their affections upon things which they are leaving shortly raise your soul to God, and let it not dwell there, where "you have no continuing city" Look up to that which is so, and send your prayers and tears and earnest desires before you thither, that when God calls, you may readily follow in person, and make a happy exchange of this miserable world for a better.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE DISCONSOLATE STATE.

When all human comforts forsake us, if God vouchsafe to supply their place with spiritual and heavenly, which are infinitely better, we are not much to wonder if the soul preserve its temper, and bear up manfully under such circumstances. But when the world and God both frown, then to bear such desertion, with patience, and be content to be abandoned of all our hopes for His glory, then to acknowledge our unworthiness, and not charge God foolishly, nor be partial to our suffering selves, this is virtue and resignation indeed, the very excellence and perfection of an humble and submissive mind. Who can forbear rejoicing while the cheerful light of God's countenance shines bright about him? What wretch is so unreasonable as to grudge his service when bounty and blessings reward his pains, and convince him that he does not serve God for naught? This is the happy season which every man desires and triumphs in. Smooth and pleasant is his passage whom the grace of God conducts and carries through this troublesome world. For, how can we think it strange that he should not feel the weight of his burden who is strengthened and supported by Almighty Power, and led through



difficulties and dangers by the Captains of his salvation ?

It is natural for us to cling fast about any thing that may give us ease, and hard for a man to divest himself of carnal affections, so that before our passions be effectually subdued, and our delight and hope fixed entirely upon God, many and frequent conflicts must be undergone. And yet at no expense, less than this, is our peace and quiet to be purchased. For, so long as a man rests upon his own strength, he is easily diverted to worldly comforts, and tastes little satisfaction but what arises from such, but he whose soul is enamoured with God and goodness, expects not his delight from sensual enjoyments, but finds a pleasure in the severer exercises of virtue and devotion, and even enjoys the difficulties he undergoes for God's sake.

If, then, God shed down spiritual comforts from above, entertain the precious gifts with humility and thanks, and lose not the effect and reward of grace by supposing it your due, or valuing yourself upon it. Rejoice in the blessing ; but temper that joy with gratitude. Let it not swell to insolence and vanity, to censoriousness or contempt of the weaker brethren ; but the more thou hast received, the greater let thy modesty be, and the more thy fear, thy diligence and watchfulness, that thou abuse not such gracious liberality. For, comfort and gladness will not last always ; a cloud will come betwixt,

and interrupt the cheerful beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Temptations will have their turn too, and, therefore, when these fall hard and heavy, let patience and humility, not hopeless despondency, be the effect of such oppressions. The greatness of thy sufferings must inflame thy trust, thy zeal, thy devotion, and fervent prayer is the proper weapon against the attacks of our spiritual adversary. For, matters are not desperate. He who takes away His supports, only withdraws them for a season, and to those who seek them with holy perseverance, will at a fit (that is at His own) time, restore them again with advantage. This is a usual thing with God. The prophets and saints of old have all advanced to their crowns by the same rough way of grief and desertion. Nor may we suppose that these disconsolate intervals are the effects of God's anger and final abdication of us.

Observe how eminent an instance of these changes we have in "the man after God's own heart." When the grace and favour of God was lifted up upon him his mind was exalted proportionately: "In my prosperity I said I shall never be cast down, Thou Lord, of Thy goodness, hast made my hill so strong." When this favour was withdrawn, he confesses the consequence of it, the deep and heavy impression it made upon his spirits: "Thou didst turn Thy face from me, and I was troubled." But yet this trouble, sharp and sensible as it was, did

not sink down into despair. His remedy was prayer, "Then cried I unto Thee, O Lord, and got me to my Lord right humbly" And how successful this application proved, himself declares. "The Lord heard me, and had mercy upon me. Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing. Thou hast put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness" Now, if these sorrows were the portion of those bright patterns of piety, if God's dearly beloved children and faithfullest servants have not lived constantly under His propitious smiles, if men of so exalted virtue were yet differently affected as they felt different dispensations of providence towards them, what are we poor, we weak, desertless wretches, that we should expect to be exempted from troubles? What is our zeal in comparison with theirs, that we should hope to have it always warm, always gay? What have we done to confine the kindly influences of that spirit, and secure them constant to ourselves, which even to those that use and improve it best, "goes and comes, and blows only where and when it listeth"? And, therefore, Job takes notice of it as a fate common to all mankind, that God does not so magnify, or set His heart upon anyone among them, but that "He visits him every morning, and tries him every moment"

Where, therefore, can we safely place our confidence except in the grace and mercy of God only? All other comforts are miserable. The company and

exhortation of religious men, the tender and affectionate advice of dear and faithful friends, the entertainment of good books, the moving strains of pious eloquence, the heavenly raptures of psalms and hymns, all these administer but very poor and slender relief to assuage the anguish of our minds or but so much as to divert and deceive our pain, if God withdraw His consolations, and leave us to the desolate condition of merely human helps. Then, as our last and best refuge, we must fly to God, humble ourselves under His mighty hand, submit to what He lays upon us, acknowledging His goodness even in our suffering, and be content to suffer still, so long as He sees fit, for He will not see fit to continue His displeasure for ever, but will revive the contrite and exalt the humble in due time.

I never yet, to the best of my remembrance, met with any remarkable good man who had not, at some time or other, fallen into these discomforts and languished under the apprehension of God's displeasures, or the abatement of his own zeal, nor was it ever designed that any man in this life should arrive at so exalted a state of holiness and absolute safety as not to be sometimes tempted. Though this happens at very different times—for some have their trials in the beginning of their conversion, which are reserved for others to their latter and more perfect days, it seems the sublime and rapturous contempla-

tions of God are a blessing too precious for those who have not first endured some trouble of mind to qualify them for so excellent a reward. Well then may we rejoice in these temptations, which are ordained certain forerunners of more abundant grace, and signs of those unspeakable consolations and delights, which are reserved for them that have approved themselves faithful. For, not to him that is excused from fighting but "to him that overcometh by striving courageously, and endureth to the end, will I give to eat of the Tree of life."

Most wisely, therefore, are these vicissitudes of prosperity and adversity appointed for the improvement of our piety and virtue. Were our trouble without intermission, no flesh could be saved, and, therefore, God softens and rewards them with inward and heavenly comforts, that, so assisted by this grace and encouraged by this favour, we may be able to bear up against our sharpest trials. But were that grace and favour constant too, we should be immoderately exalted with our performances, and impute the blessings of God to our own merit. And, therefore, the returns of affliction and spiritual desertion are convenient to prevent or check our pride. They show us that, how greatly soever we may value ourselves, yet we are not so perfect but that we deserve to suffer, and the good we receive, we receive not of debt, but of liberality and free grace. Mistake not, man, the devil never sleeps.

He always watches for an opportunity to assault and work thee mischief. The flesh is not utterly dead ; nor its appetites and passions so totally extinct but that every fresh object will awaken them into lust. Be thou, therefore, awake too, and prepare every day for some new conflict , speak not peace to thyself when beset on every side with numerous and restless enemies , wretched is thy case if their violence be suffered to bear thee down, or their subtle and wakeful malice surprise thee into sin.

## CHAPTER V.

### AFFLICTIONS.

"It is good for me that I have been in trouble," says David. Nor is it David's case alone, for many men have reason to bless that Providence which sends crosses and calamities upon them. These bring a man's thoughts home, put him upon reflection, and help him to understand himself and his condition. They show him that he is in a state of exile and pilgrimage, and forbid him to set up his hope and rest in a strange country, where he is no better than a sojourner.

Nor is it thus with those sufferings alone which the immediate hand of Heaven inflicts, but even those whereof men are the instruments. The injuries and contumelious usage, the calumnies and censures of them who speak and think ill of us, bring their profit with them too, even when most wrongful, most underserved. For, these oftentimes are an occasion of rectifying our measures and bringing us to a juster and more modest opinion of ourselves. They cure our ambition and vainglory, and convince us how vain a thing it is to thirst after reputation and the praise of men, when even innocence and goodness cannot protect us from slander and reproaches. They teach us to set a due value

upon the testimony of our own consciences, and the righteous approbation of God, the searcher of hearts, when that which he will not fail to commend and reward cannot escape the contempt and condemnation of the world, nor prevail for so much as fair quarter from our mistaken and injurious brethren.

It is, therefore, both our duty and our wisdom so entirely to place our happiness and expectations in God alone, that we shall not need to be extremely solicitous for many outward comforts, or feel ourselves destitute, or much dejected, when any of these happen to fail or forsake us. For, when a well-disposed man is oppressed with sufferings and temptations, perplexed with evil thoughts, he then feels, experimentally, how necessary the divine assistance is, and how little he is able to do or endure without it, then he is touched with inward remorse, then does he groan in secret, and, in the anguish of his heart, pour out his requests for relief and deliverance, then even life itself becomes burthen, and death desirable, as that which will translate him from this valley of tears and corruption, to a life of immortality with his God. In a word, such circumstances as these are more effectual than ten thousand arguments to convince him, by his own sensible experience, that perfect security and entire satisfaction are not so much as consistent with the condition of man in this present world; and, therefore, we must be content



to wait for another and future state, which alone deserves our affection, because it alone can make us truly and completely happy.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE TRIAL OF TRUE LOVE

*Christ* —I have observed, My son, thy notions of divine love, but thou, alas ! art not yet arrived to that resolute bravery and prudence there described.

*Disciple* —Lord, make me sensible wherein I fail, and teach me how to mend it

*Christ* —A small temptation shocks thy obedience Thou bogglest at difficulties, and fallest from thy own steadfastness, if God seems to withdraw his favour. The comforts and assistance of graces are to be wished with zeal, but not with impatience, nor mayst thou so set thy heart upon them, as presently to recoil, if such supplies do not at all times answer thy expectation. God hides his face to try thy courage. For, true magnanimity is most eminently seen in troubles and distresses ; in turning the deaf ear to all those crafty insinuations of the enemy which take the advantage of melancholy and deep perplexity of heart, to ruin and seduce unstable souls by tempting them to despair. This virtue rejoices in prosperity, but does it with such temper as not to be offended, and fall away by reason of adversity.

He that loves prudently, keeps his eyes upon

the giver, considers the kindness and disposition of his friend, and values the gift by that, not by its own quality and intrinsic worth. He finds more real satisfaction in God's affection than in the most profuse and desirable benefits which flow from it. Not that God would condemn all doubts and sad misgivings, for those are incident to the best men, and the infirmities of nature do not admit such perfect evenness of mind as is always affected alike with the love and delights of holiness.

Those sensible pleasures that good men sometimes feel themselves transported with, are the effect of bounty and favour and great indulgence, not necessary and inseparable consequences of virtue. 'The sweet foretastes of heavenly joys are such as you cannot depend upon, till brought to the fruition of that land of promise.

And, therefore, no just conclusion can be drawn from thence to the prejudice of those who want them because in this life they are given at discretion, and frequently make way for a severer and more seasonable discipline. And when that discipline takes place, then to persist in doing well to strive manfully against all the reluctances of frail flesh and blood, and hold out despite all the importunities and discouraging suggestions of the tempter, this is a proof of true spiritual bravery, and entitles such valiant combatants to a noble reward and exceeding bright crown.

Let reason, therefore, and a well-grounded faith, not fancy and imagination, govern thy behaviour, and after what manner soever thy soul is affected, let thy purposes of obedience be still the same, and thy perseverance unbroken. Sometimes perhaps thou art all rapture and joy, and these ecstasies are not what the profane world suppose, mere dreams and delusions sometimes again thou wilt relapse into weakness and wanderings, these are not thy choice, but thy misfortune; nor dost thou create them to thyself, but suffer them with much regret. Now, what is not the man's own act shall never be imputed to him as a fault, and what is thus, by God's permission, or the frailty of nature, if rightly managed, will tend to thy advantage, and rather improve than endanger thy virtue.

This indeed you must know and constantly remember, that the inveterate enemy of souls is ever labouring, by all means, to cool your zeal. He watches and greedily takes hold of all occasions to slacken your devotion, to prevail upon you to neglect or abate your prayers and other holy exercises; to divert your pious thoughts and fix them upon objects of a different kind, to beat you off from that strict guard which ought always to be kept upon your soul, and to undermine your good intentions and repeated resolutions. He conveys many loose and wicked thoughts into your heart, uses a thousand sleights and artifices to represent religion

a tiresome, tedious and unnecessary thing, and to draw off your attendance upon God in prayers, in hearing His Word, in reading the Holy Scriptures. And happy he thinks himself if by degrees he can draw you to a disuse of these things, for, nothing more provokes his malice, and crosses his designs than to see men frequently upon their knees, zealous in discovering and confessing their sins, devout and attentive comers to church. When, therefore, he would persuade you to be cold and remiss in any matter of this nature, be sure to give no credit to his false and wheedling insinuations, for they are so many snares laid to captivate and destroy you. Turn smartly back upon him, with a "get thee behind me, satan," "Blush, if thou canst, unclean spirit, at thy own treacherous villainy, I am well aware of thy deadly baits, and sensible that hell and death are upon the hook, thy sly deceits are lost upon me, for, I am resolved already, and my Lord will assist my weakness, and enable me to overcome thy temptations. Think not to terrify me with difficulties, for death and sufferings are light calamities in comparison with guilt and sin and these I infinitely rather choose than once comply with thy wicked motions. Begone then, and for ever hold thy peace: for I will stop my ears, and am, from this minute, inflexibly deaf to thy most troublesome solicitations. Thou thinkest to run down a poor weak mortal, but even that mortal is a match for thee through the

Lord that strengthens him , And strengthen me  
 He will, for the Lord is my light and salvation,  
 whom then shall I fear ? The Lord is the strength  
 of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid ? Though  
 an host were banded together against me, yet will  
 I not be dismayed , for, my God is the rock of my  
 confidence."

Fight, therefore, the good fight and follow the  
 Captain of thy salvation, like a stout soldier. And,  
 if at any time, thou lose ground, through human  
 infirmities, rally thy forces again quickly, and enter  
 upon a second engagement with redoubled vigour,  
 not doubting seasonable recruits from me. But if  
 at any time thou prove victorious, let not this  
 success exalt thee beyond measure. For, pride and  
 arrogance are of fatal consequences , they often end  
 in dangerous errors, and are justly punished with  
 almost incurable blindness. Let the frequent ex-  
 amples of vain men, undone by their own folly, be  
 set before thy eyes, as so many sea-marks, to warn  
 thee from steering the same dangerous course , and  
 the greater conquests thou obtainest over the devil  
 and thy own frailty, the more humble and cautious  
 let these advantages make thee in thy conduct  
 and the more just to God, in ascribing the whole  
 success and glory to the powerful assistance of His  
 grace.

## CHAPTER VII

### GOD IS OUR ONLY COMFORT IN TROUBLE

Whatever comforts and happiness I propose, this is not the time and place of enjoying them, but I expect that blessed fruition in another state. For what would it avail could I attain the utmost delights the world can afford, when a very short space must, of necessity, put a period to them? Do not then mistake thy happiness, my soul, for these things are not, and cannot be, thy rest. The fulness of joy and undisturbed pleasure is nowhere to be found, save in God only, He is the comforter of the afflicted, He the wealth of the poor, He the support and strength of the weak, He the glory and great reward of the humble.

Nor let it disturb thy peace, or discourage thy hopes that thou canst not yet aspire to thy promised felicity. For God is faithful and cannot lie. Only wait for His own time patiently, and thou shalt not fail of His mercy, and an abundant recompense of thy faith and patient trust in due season. But if this delay draw off thy affections to present comforts, and abate thy zeal for future and distant rewards, thou shalt desire earthly blessings, and not be filled, and at the same time shalt lose those heavenly and eternal joys which alone can satisfy and make thee

happy. Use, then, these temporal things, but love none but the things that are eternal. The present were not designed for enjoyment, but for necessity and convenience. Thy nature is not cut out for them, nor is it in their power to make thee perfect, though all, this mortal state is capable of, were united together for that purpose. For, God alone is a good, large enough to fill the desires of an immortal soul. He only is proportioned to thy wants and noble faculties, and the happiness to be met with in Him is not that transitory, imperfect thing which the children of this generation fondly covet and admire, but that exquisite, that infinite and inward delight, of which the pure in heart and spiritual persons receive some sweet foretastes and pledges, by having their conversation in heaven while they themselves are upon earth. For, man is vain, and all his comforts like him, empty and unsatisfactory, false and fleeting, swift in decay, and of short continuance, but those from God resemble the perfections of their author, spiritual and true, immutable and eternal. A truly pious soul can never be destitute, because he constantly bears his happiness about him, and when bereft of all besides,\* can thus converse with Him in the profoundest solicitude.

Blessed be Thy mercy dearest Lord! Blessed be Thy cheering presence! O let me never be deprived of this inestimable bliss. While I have this consolation within I feel no want of earthly enjoyments, for,



these supplies exceed them all. Oh ! let me thankfully rejoice in Thy favour, and the light of Thy countenance shined up upon me ! Or, if at any time Thou withdraw those bright beams, and interpose a cloud of sorrow, yet even then preserve me from sad distrust, and let the consideration of Thy will, which is always best, be my support in my blackest and most melancholy circumstances. Let me not cast away my hope and confidence, because Thou hidest Thy face for a season, but help me to discern the great wisdom and benefit of such trying dispensations, and to support my faith with the prospect of that reward which is laid up in heaven for those upon whom patience hath its perfect work. For, Thou, O Lord, art gracious and merciful, and though we perpetually offend and provoke Thee, yet wilt "Thou not always be chiding nor keep Thy anger for ever," but wilt turn again, and, in much compassion, quicken Thy suffering servants that they may rejoice in Thee, and triumph over their calamities

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE NECESSITY OF PATIENCE.

By all the collections of religious instructions, and the little experience I have of the world, penance seems to me a most necessary virtue for, the condition of man in this life is so exposed to calamities and sorrows, that despite all his endeavours after peace, troubles await him everywhere, and his state is of warfare and continual suffering. It is so, nor is it fit it should be otherwise. For, those men have a wrong notion of peace who make it consist in freedom from suffering, in either having no troubles, or being insensible of any. This is a state neither attainable by a man nor convenient for a man who has his trust in God. The peace I would have thee aspire to is such as is consistent with afflictions, and this is gained when a man hath brought himself to that equal composure and resigned temper of soul as firmly to persist in his duty, and to rest satisfied with the dispensations of God, when He thinks fit to try his virtue by very great and grievous adversities. If this appears to be a hard saying, think how much harder it will be to endure the torments of hell, and the implacable vengeance of an angry God. Nature, as well as religion, teaches men, of two evils to choose the less; and this is done, when they set them-

selves submissively to undergo tribulation here, for the sake of God and a good conscience, that they may, by such patient suffering, deliver themselves from the effects of His wrath and never-ceasing punishment hereafter

Now tribulation is a portion distributed in common to all the sons of men, distributed in large measures, even to those children of this generation whom thou perhaps vainly imaginest to be most exempted from it. For, even the gayest and most prosperous of them all are not without their many and sore evils. It is true, indeed, they take a great deal of pleasure, indulge in their inclinations without control, and so their misery makes a less sensible impression upon their spirits, but miseries they have. Or put the very best of their case, and suppose their joys to be without any interruption, their wishes without any disappointment, yet even thus how long would their happiness last? 'Alas' They vanish like a dream, and all their prosperity soon scatters like smoke. Nay, not only the enjoyments themselves, but the very remembrance of them perish in a moment. Their life is but a vapour, and death will be sure to swallow them up and their gaieties in speedy and perpetual oblivion.

But this is putting the case more favourably than it ever happens in reality, for even in this life, their plenty and pleasures are chequered with misfortunes,

and all their sweets alloyed with a bitter mixture of cares and fears and inward perplexities of heart. The very objects that give pleasure, bring pain along with them too. And this is one great argument, how wise a Providence the world is governed by, that the very inordinacy of those affections which pursue the pleasures of sense so eagerly should prove a torment to the guilty mind and embitter those very pleasures they indulge. These very pleasures, too, are short and fleeting treacherous and deceitful, irregular and exorbitant, a shame and blemish to human nature, and if men be not sensible of this, that ignorance proceeds from their own inadvertency. Their lesson is intoxicated with present delights, and their minds, blinded by vicious habits, by which they degenerate into brutes, stupidly abandon themselves to the transitory pleasures of sin and lust, at the expense of everlasting pains, and consult the present gratification of a vile mortal body with the ruin of a precious and immortal soul.

Go not thou, therefore, after their excesses, nor place thy happiness in serving, but rather in commanding, subduing, denying, mortifying thy own inclinations. "Delight thou in God and He shall grant thee thy heart's desire." For, this delight will teach thee that the happiness of man consists in inward and spiritual satisfactions, in the contempt of this world and its empty gaieties. And the less these are esteemed and affected, the greater and more ravish-

ingly sweet shall those generous and noble pleasures prove, which result from the experience of God's favour, and the substantial comforts of a good conscience.

But still these comforts are not to be had without much labour, many conflicts, and sharp sufferings, for, corrupt inclinations of flesh and blood, and the confirmed habits of vice, create great difficulties, and ask time and pains to conquer. And conquered they may be by introducing the contrary habits of virtue. The flesh indeed will recoil, and think itself ill-used, but reason and religion will silence those grumbings and resolute perseverance in good works vanquish all thy reluctances. The subtle old serpent will seduce and importune thee, but prayer and good thought drive the evil spirit away, and fasting and holy exercise or constant lawful business, will keep him out. For, he never enters so easily, so successfully as when idleness sets open the door, and an empty heart makes room for his wicked suggestions.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE POWER OF THE LOVE OF GOD

I laud and magnify Thy glorious name O Father of Heaven, for all the goodness and tender compassions with which Thou hast been pleased to remember and relieve my misery. For, unto Thy loving kindness alone, O Father of Mercies and God of all comforts are owing all the supports with which the soul of Thy unworthy servant has been at any time refreshed in the midst of my trouble. And, therefore, to Thee alone be the praise. To Thee, O Father, will I render honour and thanksgiving for evermore. Descend then, Blessed God, into that soul for which Thou hast expressed so great a tenderness and let Thy presence fill me with gladness. for, Thou art my health, my joy and my glory, my hope and my refuge in the day of distress.

I must confess with sorrow that my love is weak and my virtue imperfect, nor can the one be supported without Thy grace, or the other be cherished unless Thou fan Thy holy fire, and feed it with Thy heavenly comforts. O visit me then with Thy salvation, and make me improve under Thy holy discipline. Deliver and purify my heart from all corrupt affections and irregular passions; heal my spiritual diseases, and take away that dross and filth which

obstruct my pure delights of divine love, decompose my patience, and shake my intentions of perseverance.

For love is great and powerful, an excellent virtue and mighty advantage in well-doing. It lightens the heaviest burdens, makes difficulties easy and smooths the rugged way of duty, takes out the bitterness of sufferings, and gives them a delightful relish. This is the principle which fires us with vigorous and active zeal, inspires brave and noble attempts, and spurs us on with an impatient desire of still higher degrees of perfection. For, love ever labours to be uppermost, and disdains to take up with low and vulgar attainments. It hates confinement, and would fain get loose from all worldly affections, so that its inward and spiritual prospects may not be intercepted by any temporal good or evil, which darkens and blocks it up. In love is the perfection of pleasure and strength, it is higher than heaven, broader than the sea, it fills the spacious universe, for, it is born of God, the first and best of all His creatures, and as it came from Him, so it never rests till it has got above all finite beings, and centres again in that only, that infinite good, from whence it originally sprung.

The person actuated by it flies with eager haste, does every thing with cheerfulness and pleasure, and suffers no impediments to stop him in his course, he gives all things liberally, and yet possesses all, be-

cause his soul is united to that supreme God in and from whom is all perfection. He looks not so much at the gift as the Giver, and be the quality of that what it will, it only serves to render him more grateful to its author. Love knows no bounds, no measure, but thinks it can never do enough, and attempts things even above its strength, not considering so much what it is able as what it is desirous and disposed to effect. The vehemence of desire takes off all sense of difficulty and thinks nothing so great but that it may and ought to aim at it. And hence proceed those mighty and astonishing achievements which love does daily bring to pass, where the fire continues strong, and is not damped by sloth and faint-heartedness.

Love is eternally awake, never tired with labour, nor oppressed with affliction, nor discouraged by fear, but like a clear and strong flame, is ever mounting upwards, and makes its way through all opposition. It cries continually in the ears (for fervent love is that cry which pierces the ears) of the Most High, and all the language of the devout souls inflamed with it is to this effect: my God, my love, Thou art my all, and I am entirely Thine. Enlarge my heart, and make me capable of yet more love, that I may feel and feast upon the sweetness of the delightful affection, and even melt away and lose myself in the ecstasies and the charms of this heavenly disposition. Increase and blow up this divine flame, that,



not content to excel others, I may daily excel myself Teach me the song of love and receive me up on high, to Thee in whom my soul delighteth . and fill me with such raptures of joy and praise, that even sense and life may be swallowed up in bliss Let me love Thee much more than myself, nay, love myself and all good men to whom Thou art dear, only in and for Thee , for so hast Thou commanded in that law of love which is but as it were a beam and efflux of Thy own glorious and divine excellence

The love of God is humble in its motions, sincere in its intention, ardent and zealous in devotion, sweet to the soul, brave in attempting, patient in enduring, faithful in executing, prudent in action, slow in resentment, generous and manly, and seeks not to please the person's self, but the person beloved For, where a man seeks his own advantage only, there interest, not love, is the principle upon which he moves. Love is cautious and circumspect, upright and humble, not soft and effeminate, not fickle and fanciful, not fond of vanities , but sober and grave, chaste and refined, constant and sedate, severe and reserved. This disposes us to submission and respect towards our superiors, to a mean and modest opinion of ourselves, to gratitude and devotion towards God ; it inspires hope and holy trust, even in times of calamity and discomfort. And necessary it is that it should do so, since no man is so happy as

to love without pain, or always to live under the light of God's countenance, so that no clouds should ever intercept the cheering warmth of His favour and create some dark intervals.

That man, therefore, does not deserve the character of one that loves God, who is not disposed and content to suffer any afflictions which the divine Providence sees fit to inflict, or thinks much to do whatever His will declares fit to be performed. In a word, the hardest and most unpalatable proofs of our virtue best declare the fervency and sincerity of it, and if disasters or calamitous accidents cool or draw off our affections, this is an argument that a man is not yet what we should all be, "rooted and grounded in love."

## CHAPTER X.

### RESIGNATION TO GOD IN TIME OF ADVERSITY.

Blessed be that wisdom and goodness, O Holy Father, which performs all Thy will, for what Thy will decrees, cannot be otherwise than good and wise. Give me grace, I beseech Thee, to rejoice, not in myself, or any other, but in Thee alone, for Thou art my only hope and crown, my joy and glory. All I have, is received at Thy bountiful hand. bountiful to a most unworthy creature, who neither could procure nor deserve the least of all Thy mercies and Thou, by giving and completing, hast not lost Thy property and right in all which, by Thy means, I enjoy or do. For, what am I, alas! but a weak, helpless wretch, acquainted with misery from my very cradle, and wasted with trouble and vexation, my face is grown old with tears, and my heart perplexed and broken with doubts and sorrows and vehement passions. I beg and long most earnestly for the blessing of peace, that peace and inward consolation which Thy children feed and feast upon. If Thou shalt fill my soul with this, it will overflow with joy and praise, and continually breathe holy hymns to the honour of Thy name. But if Thou turn away Thy face, as sometimes Thou seest fit to do, I find myself unable to run in the way of Thy commandments; and prostrat-

ing myself in the anguish of my soul, I beat my breast and wring my hands for the loss of that light and comfort, that strength and protection, which I enjoyed while under the shadow of Thy wings, and defending from the assaults of sorrow and adversity

Righteous Father, the time is come when Thou art pleased to try me, but even at this time, and at all others, praised be Thy name Dearest Father, it is very meet that now Thou callest me to it, I should suffer in obedience to Thy will Most Honoured Father, this is the hour, even that important hour, which Thou, from all eternity, hast ordained to be the season of my outward oppression and discomfort, becoming the instrument of endless life and joy to me, but though this heaviness may endure for a night, yet light and glory will return in the morning This, Holy Father, is Thy own appointment, and what Thou willest Thou never willest in vain. For, even this suffering in the present life is a mark of Thy favour and friendship, the returns, instruments, the manner and continuance of my afflictions, are all of Thy permitting, for, nothing is or can be done without Thy providence and direction, without some wise and excellent design. Even I myself am sensible "how good it is for me to have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes," and utterly discard all pride and carnal confidences. The shame and self-reproach I laboured under have taught me

to expect relief from God and from man. And all my afflictions put me upon contemplating the unsearchable depths of Thy providence, which, with a wonderful 'cmper of justice and equity, layeth these burdens upon bad and good, without any nice or discriminating marks of love or hatred in this present world.

I will, therefore, render the most unfeigned thanksgiving to my God, for that in marvellous kindness He hath not spared the rod when it was convenient for me. I acknowledge His mercy, even in the pains and crosses and sorrows I have endured, whether of mind or body, or estate, and yet much more, for those refreshments and remedies which Thou alone hast afforded me. For vain is all the help of man, but Thou art the true, the powerful physician of the souls. Thou "woundest and healest. Thou bringest down to the gates of hell, and raiseth up again." Thy chastisement shall teach me wisdom, Thou shalt beat me with the rod, and I shall not die. Behold me, Lord, most willingly submitting to Thy discipline, oh, strike and spare not, so Thou bend my stubborn heart, and bring down my high spirit, and make me tractable and obedient. I, Lord, and mine are at Thy disposal, put forth Thy hand and touch them as Thou pleasest. For this I know, that how grievous soever these temporal crosses may be, yet better it is to feel the weight of Thy hand *here* than *hereafter*. All things are naked

and open to Thee, even the inmost recesses of our hearts, Thou knowest the things that will be, before they are, and needest not that any should inform Thee what is done upon earth. Thou seest what will contribute most to my improvement in goodness, with how great and good effect distresses have to scour the rust from our inactive minds and brighten all with our virtues. Take then, my God, Thy own measures. I only beg that Thou wouldst not disdain and give me over, think me unworthy Thy care for those blemishes and misdemeanours of my life, which none are better acquainted with, which none indeed are thoroughly acquainted with, but Thou, the searcher of hearts, alone.

Work in me, I entreat Thee, a true amendment, instruct me in all things fit for me to know, dispose me to love things worthy of my affection, to think that every thing deserves my praise in proportion as it pleases Thee, to esteem nothing highly but what is precious and honourable in Thy sight, to look with a generous disdain upon all that Thou thinkest vile, and never be reconciled to what Thou hatest. Let me not, I beseech Thee, judge by outward appearances, the seeing of the eye, or the hearing of the ear, which are subject to infinite delusions and mistakes, but give me a right judgment in all things, whether they relate to this or another state, to the outward or the inner man, and, above all, let it be my special care to inform myself of Thy will concern-

ing me Men who form their judgment upon sense often err, men who set their affections upon the sensible objects of this world are frequently disappointed and miserable, for, is a man, for instance, one whit the better because he is grown great in other men's esteem? Is common opinion the standard of merit? Certainly not Here every man abuses his fellow, the cheat imposes upon another as great a cheat, the vain puffs up the vain, the blind misleads the blind, the weak supports the weak, and all the while, by empty and undeserved commendation, each brings a true reproach upon the other, while he extols him against sense and reason. For, after all, these praises are but words without any significance, nothing more than an and empty sound, for, every man is just so much, so good, and neither more nor less, than he is in Thy esteem only

## CHAPTER XI.

### HOW GOD OUGHT TO BE ADDRESSED IN TIME OF ADVERSITY.

The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh a blessed be the name of the Lord." Yea, blessed be Thy name, for this very calamity with which Thy fatherly wisdom and affection hath now thought fit to chastise and try me. I cannot flee from the scourge of Thy rod, but I will fly to Thee for succour, and beg that Thou wouldst assist me with Thy patience and turn all my sufferings to my soul's advantage. I am indeed in trouble, and cannot but confess the present disorder which this misfortune gives me. But this is my own infirmity, and "I know not what to pray for as I ought." For, what shall I say? "Lord save me from this hour?" No, dearest Father, Thou hast not brought me to this hour, had it not been for Thy glory and my own good. And, therefore, I will rather beg that my affliction may continue till Thy gracious purposes are accomplished in me, and when Thou seest me sufficiently humbled, that then, and not before, Thou wouldst refresh, and raise, and deliver me out of it.

For, my deliverance, I am duly sensible, can come from no other hand; since I myself am weak, and poor, and blind, and know not what is best, or what



to do. Grant me then, blessed Lord, a rescue in Thy own due time, and in the meanwhile strengthen me with patience, that by Thy powerful aid I may bear up against the sharpest tribulations without despondency or distraction. "Not my will, Lord, but Thine be done," shall be the constant language of my heart, my sinful heart, which acknowledges Thy mercy in the midst of wrath, and sadly reflects that Thou hast punished me much less than my offences deserve. Oh, that this humble sense of my own guilt may work in me such quiet and contented submission to Thy will that I may neither unduly decline or unthankfully murmur at the weight on the length of my sufferings, till Thou see fit to compose this storm, and restore to me the comforts of Thy favour and indulgent providence !

For, if the tempest still rage, this is not the effect of want of power in Thee to quiet it, but because a perfect calm is not yet seasonable for me. Thy mighty hand can lay it in a moment, Thou canst abate its fury, or Thou canst protect and support me under its violence and extremity. I know Thou canst ; for, Thou hast taught me by my own experience, and the remembrance of Thy former mercies will not suffer me to doubt the efficacy of Thy power. But in proportion as my grief and burden is greater, so much the sweeter and more refreshing let Thy healing virtue and spiritual consolations be ; and let me feel Thy gracious promise

**"That Thou wilt not suffer Thy servants to be tempted above that they are able, but wilt, with the temptation also, make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it."**

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE MISERIES OF OUR PRESENT STATE.

Every trivial accident casts me down, and I am often overwhelmed with sorrow upon occasions which, my calmer thoughts abundantly convince me, deserve rather my contempt than my serious concern. Sometimes I see and condemn my own folly, and mighty resolutions I make, how bravely I will behave myself for the time to come, and yet, upon the next assault of some slight misfortune, this imaginary hero is beaten from his post, and cannot stand the shock of a very common difficulty. The poorest and most despicable things are, I find, capable of becoming great and dangerous temptations, and I, who at a distance defy them, yet, when brought to the trial, feel, by sad experience, upon how slippery ground I stand.

This is indeed, O God, the wretched condition of Thy poor unstable servant. But, Lord, do Thou, in much compassion, look upon my frailty, for Thou knowest it more perfectly than I myself can. Stretch forth Thy hand, and draw me out of these deep waters, and out of this mire of sin and weakness, that I sink not in my corruption. I can easily express the melancholy reflections, the shame and confusion, the indignation and sad perplexity of heart

which the consciousness of my own inability to resist temptations, and the inconstancy of my best and most vigorous purposes create, and though my will be not always vanquished, nor do I yield to every wicked suggestion, yet the repeated assaults of the enemy disturb my quiet, and I am weary of a life which consists in perpetual hazards and painful conflicts with myself. The wretchedness of my condition is but too manifest. I need no other argument to prove it, than that easy access evil thoughts find in my breast, which, despite all my watchful cares and most manful struggles, are much sooner insinuated and received, than either driven out again, or prevented from entering.

Look down, then, Thou Almighty Father and lover of souls, and interpose Thy power and protection; give seasonable succour and happy success to my too fruitless endeavours. Arm and guard me with strength from above, and suffer not the old man, the corrupt inclinations of my flesh, which refuses to be entirely subdued and brought to reason, to usurp the dominion over my better part. For, this obstinate rebel renews its insurrections daily, and bids me battle, calls me to combats and hazardous engagements, which must never, never end in perfect peace and safety so long as this miserable state of mortality endures. Most miserable indeed, since every action and accident of my life involves me in fresh dangers; since every step I take is upon

snarcs and precipices, since every time and place is thick beset with troubles and toils, treachery and temptation, and a numerous host of enemies ready to devour and swallow me up. For, fatal uninterrupted successions of trials every moment renew their attacks, and when happily vanquished many, and fondly promise myself a truce, as many more immediately draw down upon me, and make fiercer and more furious attempts upon some other quarter, which I hoped had been sufficiently covered from their approaches

And can a life, subject to such surprise and hazards, embittered with so many troubles and severe trials, encumbered with so much frailty and corruption, be valued and mightily coveted? Nay, can that deserve the very name of life which naturally breeds plagues and diseases, and exposes us to such variety of deaths? Yet stupid man hugs and embraces and esteems it his only happiness; expects ease in the midst of distraction, pursues joys in a valley of tears, and vainly sets up for the boasted perfection of pleasure, in a condition of inevitable misery, and lingering certain pain. Sometimes, indeed, the tender sense of some afflictions cuts us to the quick, and in our melancholy moods we give the world hard words, call it *deceitful*, *treacherous*, and *vain*, but even they who rail at it most liberally, and profess to hate and despise it, cannot be prevailed upon to be content to leave it. The flesh and its

affections have still a powerful influence, and spur men on to the pursuit and love of those very enjoyments which, reason and their own experience have taught them, cannot be worth their pains, nor in any degree answer their deluded expectations. For, we must observe that our love and hatred of this world proceed from very different causes and principles. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" engage our affection, and these are ever present and ever vehement with us. The calamities and griefs and pains we feel, provoke our hatred and contempt, and represent life a burden and misery, and these have their intervals, and work upon us feebly and by fits. The former too strike it with inclination, and are assisted by nature the latter have no influence upon us but what their own weight gives, all their impressions are forcible and violent, heavy and painful, and such as we submit to, only because we cannot help it.

Thus sense and sinful pleasure get within us, and which is very lamentable, debauch our reason. The present ticklings of the body cheat the mind, and vitiate our palates to that degree, that, being prepossessed with a false taste of worldly sweets we have no relish left for that delicious entertainment with which God and religion feed and feast the pure and heavenly-minded soul. For, O! those happy men who have learnt to despise and abandon earthly things, and consecrated themselves entirely to God

mortification, self-denial, and a steady course of severe virtue, their exalted spirits know and feel the truth of God and His promises, they find unspeakable charms and sensible delights in the voluntary refusal of those toys and baits which cannot be had with satisfaction, nor coveted with safety. They see and despise and pity the folly of abused mankind, discover the lurking frauds of the tempter, and that the imagined happiness and boasted pleasures of sensual and earthly men are only snares and dangers, vanity and cheat

## CHAPTER XIII

### HOW TO PRAY TO GOD.

Lord Jesus Christ said—

Let this, my son, be the language and style of all thy prayers ' Lord, if it be Thy pleasure, grant me this request , if what I ask conduce to Thy glory, do Thou be pleased to give and prosper it . Lord, if Thou, to whom all things and their consequences are perfectly known, seest that this will be for my true advantage, not only bestow it but, with it, grace to use it to Thy glory , but if Thou seest it may prove hurtful to me, do not only deny my petitions, which proceed from ignorance and mistake, but remove far from me the very desire of that which cannot be obtained without my prejudice."

This last is a very reasonable and expedient request , because many desires, which seem not only innocent but even virtuous and wise, profitable and praiseworthy, in a man's own eyes, are yet neither inspired by God nor agreeable to His will , nor is it easy to discern whether one be acted by good or evil spirit ; or whether, in the matter of his prayers, his own inclination and private respect do not determine him And many a one, who hath fancied the impulse of divine grace, and persuaded himself that he hath been directed and acted by it all along,



finds the delusion out at last, and what he imputed to the Spirit of God, proves, in the end, a suggestion of the devil, or the eager longing of his own vain mind.

The surest way, then, never to offend God in thy desires, and to be accepted in thy addresses to Him, will be to temper all thy inclinations with His fear, and not so much as indulge in a secret wish, without such reservations as may testify an entire submission to the divine disposal. And when those wishes break out into words, men shall do well to conceive and present them in such forms as may express some check upon themselves, and mighty caution in restraining their tongues from asking any thing in a peremptory manner but leaving the matter entirely to God's better choice as thus "Lord, Thou knowest whether the having or the being denied the matter of my petition be most convenient, and therefore all I beg is, that what Thou seest most expedient may be done; I ask, indeed, as is my duty, but I presume not to prescribe to Thy heavenly wisdom. Give, therefore, Lord, such things, and in such measures, and at such times as Thou seest fit. Deal with me as Thou knowest is necessary, for, that, I am well assured, is best for me which is most agreeable to Thy will, and most conducive to Thy glory. Appoint me any post, and use me as Thy own; turn and change me and my fortune at pleasure. I only beg to be qualified for Thy dispensa-

tions, to use them rightly and greatly to improve under them For I am Thy servant, devoted to Thee without the least reserve I desire not to live to myself, but to Thee Oh ! that I might be enabled faithfully and worthily to perform that homage and duty to all which my heart is most freely and sincerely disposed "

## CHAPTER XIV

### A THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S MERCIES

"Open Thou the eyes of my understanding, O God, that I may see and obey the wondrous things of Thy law." Give me the perfect knowledge of "Thy will and possess me with a reverent and thankful sense of all Thy goodness and loving kindness to me and to all men, that I may show forth Thy praise and publish Thy mercies. I know these are so numerous and great that I can never magnify them worthily, the least of them exceeds my power to express, and when I consider them, I am so far from any vain pretence of merit that all my thoughts are overpowered and lost in wonder. For, all our advantages of mind and body, of person and fortune, those which are endowments and ornaments of nature, and those which exalt and supply the defects of nature, are all the effects of Thy bounty and beneficence, from which every good and perfect gift cometh."

Thou art the common source, the universal repository, from whence our benefits are drawn down. Not to all in equal proportions, it is true, but be the measure less or more, it is still Thy distribution. He who receives most is indebted, for the whole, to Thy liberality; and he who hath least could not

have had that little but from Thee. He to whom Thou hast dealt Thy blessings most plentifully is not from that dispensation to take an estimate of himself. his plenty will not justify any confidence or boast of his own merit, nor may he exult over his brethren, or behave himself uncommonly, and disdain or despise those from whom Thy mercies have distinguished him. For, the greatness of men's deserts is most eminently discovered by a modest and mean opinion of themselves, courtesy and condescension to others, gratitude and devotion towards God. And the more they are sensible of their own wants and unworthiness the better they qualify themselves for fresh and greater demonstrations of Thy love and liberality. Again, the man to whom Thou hast distributed more sparingly, must not repine and be discouraged, nor fret and grudge the larger portion of his wealthier neighbour; but keep his eyes and mind wholly intent upon Thee, and admire the freedom of Thy grace, which as it cannot be obliged to any, so gives to all largely and without partial respect of persons.

For, Thou art to be praised in all Thy gifts by every man, because all comes from Thee. And Thou art master of Thy own favours, Thou givest without upbraiding, and withholdest without injustice; Thy wisdom knows what measures are proper and expedient for each person; and the reasons why one man differs from another lie not within the

compass of our knowledge, but must be left entirely to Thy judgment to determine the fitness of them.

In this persuasion, Lord, I readily acknowledge and adore Thy mercy in suffering me to want many of those advantages which the generality of mankind set a mighty value upon. Nay, I am satisfied, that men ought to be afflicted, and humble their souls with the consideration of their own wants and unworthiness, yet so as not only not to give way to sad despondencies and distrust of Thy mercy, but even from this very subject to draw matter of comfort and joy, because Thou hast so particularly declared Thy affection to the contrite and humble souls, and given them marks of more than ordinary favour

Such were those apostles, so mean in their own and the world's esteem, whom Thou madest choice of for witnesses of Thy truth and attendants upon Thy person. Those very heroes in the story whom Thou hast appointed judges and rulers of the whole world in matters of religion were recommended to that high promotion by being meek and poor in spirit, void of guile, and mortified to the world, patient in suffering, content with insolence and barbarous treatment, and proud of nothing but being thought worthy to endure shame and pain: so distant from common men, so singular were their notions, which disposed them with joy and eagerness to embrace what others dread and detest and shun with all their industry and might.

The never-failing spring of joy and comfort, which they who truly love and fear Thee, and are thankful for Thy infinite goodness, find within, flows from the constant resignation of their minds to Thy disposal, and the reflections upon Thy wise eternal purposes, which check their proneness to partiality and discontent, and make every dispensation of Thy providence welcome to them. They are abased with equal satisfaction as others are exalted, and regard not high or low, honourable or despised, according to common reputation, but consider that their station and circumstances in the world are chosen and ordained by Thee, and cannot, therefore, but be good, nay, better than any other, because of the effect of Thy divine appointment, which always knows and chooses the best. Could we but once arrive at this considerate temper of mind, the different accidents of life would cease to be either much uneasy or extravagantly pleasant. The violent shocks upon our passions would be effectually prevented, because Thy honour would take place above our own appetites and mistaken interests. Poverty and shame would be acceptable, as coming from the same hand with riches and honour. And even those things which are most agreeable to the relish and inclinations of human nature, would please and comfort us more with the consideration of their being bestowed by Thee, the author of all our happiness, than upon the account of any advantages to be had from the things them-

selves. The zeal for Thy honour, in the extremity of distress, should support good men more, and find greater regard from them, than all the wealth or glory or other external blessings which Thou, at any time, dost or canst confer upon the most prosperous of the sons of men in this world. So small is the consideration of the greatest gift, in comparison with the wise, the good, the Almighty Giver and Disposer of our fortunes, who orders all things for the best, and is, in all, our kindest friend and constant benefactor.

## CHAPTER XV.

### TEMPTATIONS.

So long as we continue in this world, we must not flatter ourselves with an imagination so vain as that of being exempted from tribulations and trials. These are so inseparable from mortality, that Job calls the life of man a "warfare" or "place of exercise." It highly concerns every one of us, upon this account, to take great care for managing himself under his temptations, to watch and pray diligently, as being duly sensible that he hath a watchful enemy to deal with, one who will not fail to take all advantages of deceiving, and who "goes about continually, seeking whom he may devour." Nor must our attainments to virtue dispose us to remit this care, for, virtue is no absolute security. No man is so perfect, so holy, as never to be assaulted, or out of the reach of this adversary. We may defend ourselves against his attacks, but still attacked we must, and most certainly shall be.

Now though there be great hazard and uneasiness yet is there likewise great profit to be made from temptations, particularly, as they contribute to the humbling our minds, to the purging off our dross, and the making us wiser by suffering. This is the rough way to happiness which all the saints of God have travelled before us, and by it, at last, were safely conducted to their journey's end, and they



who fell off and were discouraged at the ruggedness of the passage, are all reprobates and castaways. No order or profession of men is so sacred, no place so remote or solitary, but that temptations and troubles will find them out and intrude upon them.

Nor ought it to seem strange that these should haunt and pursue us close, at all times and places, since we ourselves carry about us the very matter of our temptations, and can never run away from that inborn concupiscence upon which they work, and from whence they take occasion to destroy us. This is the account we may reasonably give ourselves, why there should be such an uninterrupted succession of temptations and miseries, and why one trouble should press so hard upon the heels of another. For, how indeed can it be otherwise, since with our innocence we lost our safety and happiness, and must be born to trouble, because the ground of our trouble is now become a part of our nature. Many men involve themselves deeper in temptations, by being too solicitous to decline them. For, we must not suppose ourselves always to have conquered a temptation when we have fled from it. The nobler, and sometimes the more effectual, way is to vanquish them by patient enduring, and being humbled under them.

This much is plain, that by declining a temptation we have not disarmed it. The root is standing still and will soon be sprouting again, and

a man who flees is so far from getting ground upon his adversary, that he rather gives him encouragement to pursue more vigorously. The way to overcome is by patience and long suffering; which, by God's assistance, and by degrees, though perhaps but slow ones, is more likely to succeed, than heat and vehemence, and any the violentest and most obstinate efforts of our own strength. When you find yourselves tempted, be sure to ask for advice, and when you see another so, deal with him gently, support him with compassion, and administer all the comforts in your power, as you could not but wish to be treated yourself were you in his afflicted circumstances

The beginning of all temptations to wickedness, is the fickleness of our own mind and want of trust in God. An inconstant and irresolute man is like a ship without a pilot, driven to and fro, at the mercy of every gust of wind. We seldom know the true extent of our own power till temptation discovers it to us. But watchfulness, which is always necessary, is chiefly so when the first assaults are made. For the enemy is more easily repulsed if we never suffer him to get within us, but upon the very first approach draw up our forces, and fight him without the gate.

And this will be more manifest, if we observe by what methods and degrees temptations grow upon us. The first thing that presents itself to the mind

is a plain single thought, this straight is improved into a strong imagination, that again enforced by a sensible delight, then follow evil motions, and when these are once stirred, there remains nothing but the assent of the will, and then the work is finished. Now the first steps of this are seldom thought worth our care, sometimes not taken notice of, so that the enemy is frequently got close up to us, and even within our trenches, before we observe him, and we have lost the day, for want of defending ourselves, while he was in a condition of being resisted. For, the longer we defer the engagement the weaker we grow, and the more our adversary gathers strength

The season of these trials is various and uncertain. Upon some they are severer presently after their conversion, upon others towards the latter end of their days. Some have them so thick repeated, that their whole life is one continued conflict, and some again have but very few and gentle trials. All which different cases are ordered by a just and wise God, who knows what each man deserves, and what he is qualified to undergo, and weighs all circumstances so justly, that His several dispensations are constantly subservient to the salvation and happiness of His chosen servants.

Let us not, therefore, despair when temptations beset us, but excite our zeal, and pray to God more fervently, that He would be our present help

and refuge in all our troubles, and as St. Paul expresses it, "That He would with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it." Let us humble ourselves under the trying hand of God, and patiently submit to His good pleasure in all our tribulations. For, those who do so "He will exalt in due time, and save them that be of a meek and contrite spirit"

By temptations and afflictions a man is brought, as it were, to the touch, by these his proficiency is measured and easily discernible. The greater these are, the more acceptable the sufferer is to God, and the brighter lustre they add to his virtue. For, to be religious and zealous in the service of God, when no uneasiness is upon us, is no mighty matter. But if we can suffer with patience and resignation, and continue steady in the love and service of God, when He afflicts and sends bitterness into our souls, this argues a noble disposition, and promises an extraordinary perfection. Some persons have come off with safety and honour in very sharp and trying instances, and yet are worsted in common and trivial ones. And this case is capable of a very good improvement; for, thus, no doubt, God gives men warning that they should not presume upon their own strength, but humbly take sanctuary in Him in matters of difficulty, moved by the experience of that weakness and frailty which hath yielded to slighter and less violent temptations.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE HAPPINESS OF THOSE WHO LOVE GOD

In having God, I have all things For, whom can I have in heaven but Him ? and what is there upon earth that I can desire in comparison with Him ? "Oh, sweet and comfortable words' But this is a sweetness which none can taste but they who love the Word of God, and not the world, neither the things that be in the world." My God to me is all, I need add no more. The men of purified understandings find this enough, and they, of purified and heavenly affections, cannot repeat it too often O God ! when Thou art present, affliction and death are pleasant, for in His favour is life and joy. When He is absent, life itself is a burden, for His displeasure is worse than death. God ! Thou makest a merry, a cheerful countenance, in Thee is abundance of peace and a continual feast. Thou givest me right notions of all events, and renderest every accident a matter of joy and praise to me. Without Thee prosperity itself is nauseous. For, nothing here below can please our palate, unless Thy favour and wisdom give it a grateful relish. To him who feeds delightfully on Thee every bitter morsel is sweet, but they who want or slight that heavenly entertainment, find the most delicious dainties harsh and bitter.

They who are wise for the world and the flesh, are most defective in the true and heavenly wisdom. The carnal wisdom ends in guilt and death, and the worldly wisdom pursues vanity and implies pomp. But they who are wise indeed, conform themselves to noble examples by a contempt of all earthly greatness and a vigorous mortification of their sensual appetites and passions, they disdain the shadow, and lay hold on the substance, pass from falsehood to truth, and from body to spirit. These are the men who love and delight in God, and find no satisfaction in the creatures, farther than as they promote the honour and serve the purpose of the great Creator. The joys they minister are subordinate and limited, not inherent and natural, but by reflection only, and everything is esteemed in proportion as it tends to its Maker's use and praise so very unlike, so infinitely different is the pleasure we feel from the Creator and the creature, from the boundless ocean of eternity, and the narrow tract of time, from the original self-existent lights and those faint beams shot down on things here below.

Shine then O Light everlasting, in comparison wherewith lights are but a less degree of darkness. Convey Thyself into my benighted soul, purge and dispel the clouds of error there, purify my polluted affections, cheer my sadness, enliven my stupid mind and all its faculties, that I may rejoice and triumph and bask in Thy bright beams. O! when will that

happy, that long wished for hour approach, when I shall be filled with Thy lustre and satisfied with Thy presence, and my God be my all in all ? For, sure I am, till that blessed time, my joys must be imperfect. I feel, alas ! I feel and lament in myself some remains of the old man still. Scourged he is, but not entirely lacerated, wounded and bruised, but not quite dead. My flesh, despite all my painful labours, continues to last against the spirit, and a domestic war distracts and breaks the peace and good government of my mind. This cannot exercise its just dominion without perpetual broils and tumultuous insurrection. But O Thou, who rulest the raging of the sea, and stillest the waves thereof when they arise, come speedily to my assistance, and quell this storm. For Thou O Lord my God, art my only hope and helper, O save, or I perish.

## CHAPTER XVII

### NOTHING TOO MUCH TO SUFFER FOR ETERNAL LIFE.

Thy toils will not continue very long, nor will thy pain and trouble always torment thee. Wait but a little longer, and look forward and see how glorious prospect opens itself, how swiftly the end of all thy sufferings approaches; and how suddenly sorrow and tumult vanish away. Even time itself is not of everlasting continuance, but that, which is bounded within so very narrow a space as this short span of life, cannot, in any fair computation, be counted long or great. Proceed then in thy duty with vigour and undaunted resolution, ply thy work hard, and fill the station God has appointed thee to, thy wages are certain and valuable.

Persist in writing, in reading, in singing, meditation, in devout prayer, in fortitude and patience. For the things prepared for them that love God are richly worth these and greater conflicts, all thou must do, all thou cannot suffer, are, in no degree, worthy to be compared with them. The day is coming, adorned with the triumphs of joy and peace: that mighty revolution, when these alternate successions of day and night shall cease, and everlasting uninterrupted light shall shine for ever. There shall



be lustre infinite, satisfaction unbroken and inconceivable, rest eternal, and above the power of any future danger. There shall then be no place left for that melancholy wish. "O that Thou wouldst deliver me from the body of this death!" No occasion for that complaint "Woe is me that I am constrained to have my habitation in this barren wilderness." For even "the last enemy" shall be subdued "and death itself destroyed." Salvation and life shall then reign for ever, sorrow and anguish, sighs and tears shall flee away, a crown of rejoicing put upon every head and thou shalt be happy in the society "of saints and angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect."

Oh! couldst thou now but see the heavens open, and with the ken of mortal eye behold the bright and everlasting crowns of "the chosen!" Were thy heart large enough to admit a just idea of this trophies and glories whom once the world despised, and thought not worthy to live upon the earth, thou then wouldst gladly embrace their sufferings and reproaches, abandon all thy vain desires of worldly greatness and disdain the perishing pleasures of the present life. Humility and patience would then appear in their native beauties; and even affliction and ignominy display such charms as must attract thy love, and make thee esteem them greater treasures and gain than all the majesty and honour and most celebrated reputation that a mortal state is capable of.

Attend then seriously to these important truths. For, they, if considered and believed in good earnest, will stop thy mouth and effectually silence all thy complaints. For, surely the sufferings of a *moment* cannot be thought too dear a price for *eternal* happiness in exchange. Surely the kingdom of God is no trifling concern. And when the losing or attaining this lies before thee, nothing can be too much to prevent that loss, nothing a hard bargain for that infinite advantage. Grovel then upon the earth no longer, but stand erect, and lift thy eyes and heart to heaven. See there the blessed effects, the mighty success, of all those sharp conflicts which the saints, while in the body, underwent, the end of all their trials and adversities, their painful severities and pious labours. These mortified afflicted men, once reputed the "filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things," the common mark of insolence and malice, are now in perfect joy, their sorrows swallowed up in transporting bliss and comfort, their dangers changed into secure peace, their labours into ease and sweet repose, their persecutions and wrongful accusations before the bar of men into thrones of glory, where they sit and judge the world, and live and rejoice.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE JOYS OF ETERNITY AND MISERIES OF THE EARTHLY LIFE.

O bright and glorious day of eternal light and bliss! a day that never declines, a sun that never sets, nor is obscure by any succeeding night, but a state always cheerful, always fixed and secure from change and sorrow, from danger and decay. How do I pant and thirst after that happy hour, when this blessed morning shall dawn and shed its beams, and with a wondrous lustre put an end to all the darkness and miseries of mortality? It does indeed already shine in the hearts and hopes of these good men, whose conversion is even now in heaven; but even there is a distant prospect, and such as, while they sojourn here, presents things only in a glass. The citizens and inhabitants of those blessed regions see it with their naked eyes they feel and enjoy its sweetness, and are all enlightened with its rays, while the distressed sons of Eve endure and groan in their exile, and cannot but lament the bitterness of their imperfect gloomy day which men on earth call evil—a day but short, and, which is worse, dismal and uncomfortable. For, who can worthily express the pains, the perplexities of body and soul, which are the necessary, the insepar-

able incumbrances of man's present condition ? A condition, wherein he is polluted with so many sins, entangled in so many difficulties, beset with so many misfortunes, oppressed with so many fears, distracted with so many cares, disturbed and diverted from his main concern by so many impertinences, deluded with so many vanities, confounded with so many errors, wasted and worn out with so much labour and trouble, assaulted by temptations, emasculated by pleasures, and tormented with great variety of necessities and want ?

Oh ' when will there be an end of this so complicated misery ? When may I hope to be enlarged and released from this bondage of sin ? When shall my thoughts and desires centre and be for ever fixed in Thee, my God, alone ? When may I attain true joy in Thee, without any alloy of bodily suffering, without any distraction of mind ? When shall I rest in firm untroubled peace ? Peace from accidents and temptations without, peace from guilt and misguiding, from the solicitations of lust and the violence of passion within ?

Behold ! I am here desolate and poor, a stranger and alone in an enemy's country, where wars rage and never cease, and terrible distresses come thick and strong upon me every day and hour. Be Thou, my God, my comfort in this exiled and desolate condition. Assuage my pain, and incline Thy favour to Thy servant whose parched and languishing soul

"gaspeth unto Thee as a thirsty land." Thou only art able to do this, for, what the mistaken world calls comforts, are but so many fresh additions to my burden. I long most earnestly to enjoy, but cannot yet attain my wish. Fain would I grasp and cling to heavenly things, but am detained and fastened down to earth by vanities below and unmortified affections, my mind labours to get above these, but even when the spirit is willing I find the flesh extremely weak, and my sensual prevails over my better and heavenly inclinations.

Thus am I, wretched man, involved in a perpetual war, and live in contradiction to myself, my own hindrance and torment, moving different ways, and pursuing different ends and prospects at one and the same time. How great is my concern and conflict when I set my mind to meditate and pray, and in the midst of this exercise am interrupted by a clutter of worldly and carnal imaginations crowding upon me? "Go not far from me O my God, neither cast away Thy servant in displeasure." Scatter these dark and gloomy clouds, which intercept my vision of Thee, by the brightness of Thy lightning; thunder upon them from heaven, "cast Thine arrows and discomfit them." Recollect my broken and scattered thoughts, help me to forget the things of this world, to reject and despise and effectually drive away all sinful imaginations. Assist me, Thou substantial truth, and root me fast,

that no blast of vanity may shake and unsettle my heart. Diffuse Thy heavenly sweetness through my soul, and chase away all nauseous, unsavoury, and impure affections, for, these cannot stand before Thee.

Particularly, my God, I implore Thy compassion upon my infirmities, and in Thy mercy impute not to me my many wandering thoughts in prayer. For, there, I must confess, my distractions are great and frequent, and I am often least of all in that place where I stand or kneel, thus while my body is before Thy foot-stool, my mind is carried away I know not whither. And this is a very melancholy reflection, such as gives me occasion to suspect and deeply bewail myself. Since where my thoughts are, there properly and indeed am I, and where my thoughts frequent and delight to dwell, there, without doubt, is the object of my affection and concern, and that, which either natural disposition or long custom renders most delightful, that, to be sure, is most familiar, and comes continually uppermost. All this I gather from that observation, which Thou eternal truth, has left us, that "where our treasure is, there will our heart be also."

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This then is the rule by which I try and sound the bent of my heart. If I love heaven, the thoughts of it will be frequent and pleasant to me; but if I love the world, the effect of this will be that I shall feel excess of joy in prosperous events, and be as immoderate in my grief for those that are

otherwise. If I love the flesh, wanton and carnal imaginations will often return upon me, and be entertained with satisfaction, but if I love the spirit, I shall find in spiritual objects a grateful relish, and dwell upon them with true delight. For, this my own senses and experience assure me, that what I love most I am best pleased to be entertained with, greediest to hear and forwardest to talk of, most careful to remember, and to preserve deep and lasting impressions of upon my mind. And, therefore, though I cannot attain to it so fully as I wish and strive, yet I can plainly perceive, and do truly value and admire, the happiness of them who can abandon all and stick to Thee alone, that commit a holy violence upon their natural inclinations, crucify the flesh, and with a pure bright zeal and a clear conscience, can offer holy, fervent prayers, a spiritual and unblemished sacrifice - where all without are forbidden entrance, and all within is composed. These men, so firmly intent upon Thee and their devotions, are fit to praise Thee with those angels whose refined excellences they so happily aspire to, and to whose blessed society Thou wilt one day exalt and admit them.

## CHAPTER, XIX.

GOD IS ALL THE GOOD MEN'S HOPE AND CONFIDENCE.

In whom, O Lord, is my hope, while here below or elsewhere, or what, of all things under heaven, can minister peace, and comfort to my soul? "Truly, my hope is even in Thee," and my joy and trust in Thy mercy alone. Poverty for Thy sake is infinitely rather to be chosen than all the riches and greatness in the world in exchange for Thy favour, and earth and exile with that favor more blissful than heaven without the fruition of Thee. For, heaven is heaven by Thy blessed presence, and where that does not reside, all is death and the grave and the hell. Thou art my desire and my portion, and therefore, to Thee my sighs and groans, and cries and prayers, continually ascend. I have no other stay or refuge who can send seasonable and suitable relief to all my dangers and necessities, but Thou alone art my hope and trust, my effectual comforter and faithful friend.

My temptations and afflictions are appointed to do me service. These are the methods by which the fidelity of Thy chosen is brought to the test; and even the harshest dispensations ought as much to engage my affections, and excite my gratitude and praise, as the brightest comforts and most desired prosperity. In Thee, therefore, O my God, I rest my soul; Thou



art my sanctuary, where I deposit the burden of all my griefs and troubles. For, there alone can they and I be safe, since all things else are feeble and uncertain, neither able nor always disposed to comfort or protect me. Friends cannot do what they wish, great men will not or cannot help, the wise, without Thee, mistake their measures, books are but insignificant diversion, and yield no solid consolation, wealth cannot buy ease and peace of mind, fortresses and coverts cannot hide me from calamity, unless Thou be with those friends, and strengthen those great men, and direct those counsellors, and instruct me by those books, and assist me in the use of wealth, and guard that strong retreat. For, peace and happiness are entirely in Thee. Thou art the end, the sum, the source of all good, the perfection of life, the depth of wisdom and knowledge; and hope in Thee is the surest, the most sensible support Thy servants can have in the miseries of this mortal life.

To Thee, therefore, I lift up my eyes, O Father of mercies, and lover of men. Comfort my soul in trouble, and purify it with Thy grace, that it may be a clean and holy habitation such as Thy glorious Majesty does not disdain to dwell in. Let no impurity be left in this temple, but purge it thoroughly from everything which may offend those eyes that cannot behold iniquity and uncleanness. Look upon me in Thy great goodness, and, after the multitude of Thy mercies, hear the prayer of Thy poor

servant, now wandering in a distant and desolate wilderness Oh, keep my soul and deliver me, lead me safe through this vale of sorrow and danger and conduct me, by the way of peace and holiness to my own home, even my heavenly country, the land of promise, the presence and eternal fruition of my God !

## CHAPTER XX

### FREEDOM OF MIND.

This is indeed the utmost perfection mortality can aspire after, to abandon all worldly thoughts, and without interruption, keep the mind upon the business of the soul and heavenly contemplation . to pass through a life thick set with cares and troubles, yet free and unconcerned, provided this unconcernedness does not proceed from stupidity, heaviness of apprehension, or slothful neglect, but from a generous liberty of soul, by which the man gets loose from all immoderate desires, and too tender love of earthly enjoyments. This faculty I earnestly covet, and beg Thee, O my God, to protect me against the cars of the world, lest the necessities of my body employ me too anxiously , and, under that pretence, my affections be ensnared, and so I entangled in multiplicity of business to the prejudice and neglect of better and weightier concerns ; or lest I be enticed to sin by the pleasures of sense, or discouraged from the steady pursuit of virtue and heaven, by too tender and afflicting resentments of any calamities that may happen to me.

I speak not now of those vain superfluities which the deluded world so vehemently counted for ; but beg to be preserved in these miseries and dangers.

For, miseries and dangers I cannot but esteem as the common and unavoidable incumbrances of life, since these are heavy, and cling close about the soul, and put it under such a strait confinement, that it cannot freely obey the dispositions it feels within, of getting above concern for the world, and fixing its desires and endeavours upon spiritual objects. Thou, O my God, are sweetness inexpressible. But, that my soul may truly relish Thee, turn, I beseech Thee, all my worldly comforts into bitterness, lest they vitiate my palate, and give a disgust to heavenly things by some deluding charm of present pretended good. O! let not flesh and blood prevail in their conflicts with the spirit, let not the world and its fading glories cheat me into ruin. let not the subtle enemy of souls supplant me with his tempting wiles. Give me courage to resist when called to the combat, patience to endure when called to suffering, firmness of mind to persist immovable in my duty, when temptations and evil suggestions labour to seduce me. Exchange, if it be Thy will, the transitory and false comforts of this world for the oil of the gladness, the assistance and sweet satisfaction of Thy blessed spirit, and instead of carnal love and sensual inclination, let the love and desire of Thee be diffused through my whole heart, and reign unrivalled there.

Even food and raiment, and the necessities by which life is sustained, are a grievance and obstruction to zealous and refined souls. But what must

be a burden let me not make an occasion of sin, by using the creatures intemperately, by a luxurious indulgence, or inordinate appetite. Nature, I know, it is my duty to support; and, therefore, entirely to refuse and neglect these provisions were sin and foul ingratitude. But to enlarge our desires beyond the proper uses of these things, and let them loose upon superfluity and vanity, delicacy and delight, thus the law of God hath most wisely forbidden, because it were in effect to connive at all licentiousness, by cherishing the flesh, and animating and supporting it in insolence and rebellion against the spirit. Between these two extremes there lies a safe middle way, in which I humbly implore the guidance of Thy hand, lest I decline from virtue on either side, and going astray after my own inclination or unadvised zeal, forsake my path, and fly out beyond the measures Thou hast prescribed for me

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A RECLUSE LIFE.

The man, who desires to maintain peace and a good understanding with others, must learn, in many cases, to deny and subdue himself. If then you would keep your ground, or advance forward in piety and virtue, possess yourself entirely with the notion of your being no better than a stranger and pilgrim only here upon earth. As such, be content to forego the enjoyments and esteem of the world, and to be accounted a fool for God's sake. For, till this be done, you are not duly prepared to retire and enter in a course of life wholly devoted to God and religion.

The peculiar habit, and tonsure, and other formalities by which monastics are distinguished from common men, add nothing to their sanctity, nor contribute in the least to render them what they pretend to be. This can only be done by a temper as different from the rest of the world as their way of living, an entire change of manners, and an effectual mortification of their passions and desires. He that retreats out of any other design but the service and honour of God, and the salvation of his soul, will be so far from avoiding misery and trouble that he will involve himself in new and greater troubles, and become more exquisitely wretched than the affairs of

the world could make him. Nobody can continue easy in his own mind who does not endeavour to become least of all, and servant of all.

Remember then that you come to obey, and not to govern the state of life to which you are called. It is a state of labour and hardship, and much suffering, not of leisure and ease and diversion. You do not so properly forsake, as change your business. For, this sort of life is such a trial of men as the fire is of gold, and none make good their post in it but such as are content to humble themselves, and heartily and cheerfully submit to any thing for God's sake.

## CHAPTER XXII.

I would supplement the foregoing chapters with the following digest of some of the instructions of Seneca, the world-renowned teacher of morality

### The Due Contemplation Of Divine Providence Is The Certain Cure Of All Misfortunes

Whoever observes the world, and the order of it, will find all the motions in it to be only vicissitudes of falling and rising nothing extinguished, and even those things which seem to us to perish are in truth but changed. The seasons go and return day and night follow in their courses the heavens roll, and nature goes on with her work. All things succeed in their turns, storms and calms. The law of nature will have it so, which we must follow and obey, accounting all things that are done to be well done so that what we cannot mend we must suffer, and wait upon providence without repining. It is the part of a cowardly soldier to follow his commander, groaning, but a generous man delivers himself up to God without struggling, and it is only for a narrow mind to condemn the order of the world, and propound rather the mending of nature than of himself. No man has any cause of complaint against providence, if that which is right pleases him. Those glories that appear fair to the eye, their lustre is but false and superficial, and they are only vanity and delusion, they are rather the goods of a dream than



a substantial possession, They may cozen us at a distance, but bring them once to the touch, they are rotten and counterfeit. There are no greater wretches in the world than many of those whom the people take to be happy. Those are the only true and incorruptible comforts that will abide all trials, and the more we turn and examine them the more valuable we find them and the greatest felicity of all is, not to stand in need of any. What is poverty ? No man lives so poor as he was born. What is pain ? It will either have an end itself, or make an end of us. In short, fortune has no weapon that reaches the mind, but the bounties of providence are certain and permanent blessings, and they are the greater, and the better, the longer we consider them, that is to say, the power of contemning things terrible, and despising what the common people covet. In the very methods of nature we cannot but observe the regard that providence had to the good of mankind even in the disposition of the world, in providing so amply for our maintenance and satisfaction. It is not possible for us to comprehend what the power is which has made all things. Some few sparks of that divinity are discovered, but infinitely the greater part of it lies hid. We are all of us, however, thus far agreed, first, in the acknowledgement and belief of that Almighty Being, secondly, that we are to ascribe to it all majesty and goodness.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

How Comes It That Good Men Are Afflicted In  
This World And Wicked Men Prosper.

If there be a providence, say some, how comes it to pass that good men labour under affliction and adversity, and wicked men enjoy themselves in ease and plenty ?

My answer is that God deals by us as a good father does by his children , He tries us, He hardens us, and fits us for Himself. He keeps a strict hand over those that He loves, and by the rest He does as we do by our slaves, He lets them go on in license and boldness. As the master gives his most hopeful scholars the hardest lessons, so does God deal with the most generous spirits, and to cross encounters of fortune we are not to look up as a cruelty, but as a contest

The familiarity of dangers brings us to the contempt of them, and that part is strongest which is most exercised. The seaman's hand is callous, the soldier's arm is strong, and the tree that is most exposed to the wind takes the best root. There are people who live in a perpetual winter, in extremity of frost and penury, where a cave, a whisp of straw, or a few leaves is all their covering, and wild beasts their nourishment. All this, by custom,

is not only made tolerable, but when once it is taken up upon necessity, by little and little, it becomes pleasant to them. Why should we then count that condition of life a calamity which is the lot of many nations ? There is no state of life so miserable but there are in it remissions, diversions, nay, and delights too, such is the benignity of nature towards us, even in the severest accidents of human life. We are apt to murmur at many things as great evils that have nothing at all of evil in them beside the complaint, which we should more reasonably take up against ourselves. If I be sick, it is part of my fate ! and for other calamities, they are usual things ; so that we should not only submit to God, but ascent to Him, and obey Him out of duty, even if there were no necessity. All those terrible appearances that make us groan and tremble are but the tribute of life. We are neither to wish, nor to ask, nor to hope to escape them; for it is a kind of dishonesty to pay a tribute unwillingly.

Am I troubled with disease or afflicted with continual losses ? Nay, is my body in danger ? All this is no more than what I prayed for, when I prayed for old age, all these things are as familiar in a long life as dust and dirt in a long way.

For, time does like a swordsman she scorns to encounter a fearful man, there is no honour in the victory where there is no danger in the way to it. In suffering for virtue, it is not the torment but the

cause that we are to consider, and the more pain, the more renown

When any hardship befalls us, we must look upon it as an act of providence, which many times suffers particulars to be wounded for the conservation of the whole. Besides that, God chastises some people under an appearance of blessing them, turning their prosperity to their ruin, as a punishment for abusing His goodness. And we are further to consider, that many a good man is afflicted, only to teach others to suffer, for we are born for example and likewise, that where men are contumacious and refractory, it pleases God many times to cure greater evils by less, and to turn our miseries to our advantage

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### PROVIDENCE DRAWS GOOD OUT OF EVIL.

How many casualties and difficulties are there that we dread as insupportable mischief, which, upon further thoughts, we find to be mercies and benefits ? as banishment, poverty, loss of relations, sickness, disgrace. Some are cured by the lancet, by fire, hunger, thirst, taking out of bones, amputation, and the like. Nor do we only fear things that are many times beneficial to us, but, on the other side we hanker after and pursue things that are deadly and pernicious, we are poisoned in the very pleasures of our luxury, and betrayed to a thousand diseases by the indulging of our palate. To lose a child or a limb is only to part with what we have received, and nature may do what she pleases with her own. We are frail ourselves, and we have received things transitory, that which was given us may be taken away.

Calamity tries virtue, as the fire does gold, nay he that lives most at ease is only delayed, not dismissed and his portion is to come. When we are visited with sickness or other afflictions, we are not to murmur as if we were ill-used : it is a mark of the

general's esteem when he puts us upon a post of danger. We do not say, my captain uses me ill, but he does me honour, and so should we say, that are commanded to encounter difficulties, for this is our case with God Almighty.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### CALAMITY IS THE TRIAL OF VIRTUE.

The story of Regulus is perhaps too well known to need comment

Briefly, he was a Roman general, taken prisoner by the Carthaginians, but liberated on parole that he might return to Rome, where, they hoped, he would use his influence in obtaining peace on terms dishonourable to his countrymen. He, however, threw the whole weight of his influence into the opposite scale, and, resisting all the persuasions of his friends to break his parole and remain at Rome, returned to Carthage where death awaited him.

What was Regulus the worse because fortune made choice of him for an eminent instance, both of faith and patience ?

He was thrown into a cage of wood stuck with pointed nails, so that which way soever he turned his body it rested upon his wounds, his eyelids were cut off, to keep him waking, and yet Meccenas was not happier upon his bed than Regulus upon his torments. Nay, the world is not yet grown so wicked as not to prefer Regulus to Meccenas, and can any man take that to be an evil of which providence accounted this brave man worthy ? "It has pleased

God " says he, " to single me out for an experiment of the force of human nature "

No man knows his own strength or value but by being put to the proof The pilot is tried in a storm the soldier in a battle the rich man knows not how to behave himself in poverty He that has lived in popularity and applause knows not how he would bear infamy and reproach, nor he that never had children, how he would bear the loss of them Calamity is the occasion of virtue, and a spur to a great mind The very apprehension of a wound startles a man when he first bears arms , but an old soldier bleeds boldly, because he knows that a man may lose blood and yet win the day



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE GREATEST EVIL IN ADVERSITY IS THE SUBMISSION TO IT.

A generous and a clear-sighted young man will take it for happiness to encounter ill fortune. It is nothing for a man to hold up his head in a calm but to maintain his post when all others have quitted their ground, and there to stand upright, where other men are beaten down—this is divine and praiseworthy !

What ill is there in torments, or in those things which we commonly account grievous crosses ? The great evil is the want of courage, the bowing and submitting to them—which can never happen to a wise man, for he stands upright under any weight. Nothing that is to be borne displeases him, he knows his strength, and, whatsoever may be any man's lot, he never complains if it be his own. Nature, he says, deceives nobody she does not tell us whether our children shall be fair or foul, wise or foolish, good subjects or traitors, nor whether our fortune shall be good or bad.

We must not judge of a man by his ornaments, but strip him of all the advantages and the impositions of fortune, nay, of his very body too, and look

into his mind If he can see a naked sword at his eyes without so much as winking, if he make it a thing indifferent to him whether his life go out at his throat or at his mouth, if he can hear himself sentenced to torments or exiles and, under the very hand of the executioner, say then to himself, "All this I am provided for and it is no more than the part of a man that is to suffer the fate of humanity" —this is the temper of mind that speaks a man happy, and without this all the confluences of external comforts signify no more than the personating of a king upon the stage, when the curtain is drawn, we are players again

Not that I pretend to exempt a wise man out of the number of men, as if he has no sense of pain, but I reckon him as compounded of body and soul The body is irrational, and may be galled, burnt, tortured, but the rational part is fearless, invincible, and not to be shaken.

This it is that I reckon upon as the supreme good of man, which, until it be perfected, is but an unsteady agitation of thought, and, in the perfection, an immovable stability It is not in our contentions with fortune as in those of the theatre, where we may throw down our arms and pray for quarter But here we must die, firm and resolute Whatsoever is necessary we must bear patiently. It is no new thing to die, no new thing to mourn, and no new thing to be merry again.

Must I be poor ? I shall have company. In banishment / I will think myself born there If I lie, I shall be no more sick, and it is a thing I can do but once

To sum up, that man only is happy that draws good out of evil, that stands fast in his judgment, and unmoved by any external violence, or, however, so little moved, that the keenest arrows in the quiver of fortune is but as the prick of a needle to him rather than a wound And all her other weapons fall upon him only as hail upon the roof of a house, that rattles and skips off again without any damage to the inhabitants

“ Count each affliction, whether light or grave,  
God's messenger sent down to thee , do thou  
With courtesy receive him , rise and bow .  
And, ere his shadow pass thy threshold, crave  
Permission first his heavenly feet to leave  
Then lay before him all thou hast , allow  
No cloud of passion to usurp thy brow,  
Or mar thy hospitality , no wave  
Of mortal tumult to obliterate  
The soul's marmoreal calmness ” “

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### A PRAYER.

Hear me, O sweetest, kindest God whom I now approach with most hearty desires of receiving Thee into my soul But how can I expect that Thou wilt not despise a place so unfit to entertain Thy pure, Thy glorious majesty / Thou knowest, my God, my weaknesses and my wants how great my sufferings, and how black my sins, how I am oppressed and afflicted, tempted and overpowered, disordered with passion, and stained with pollution To Thee I fly for succour against my infirmities, for physic against my diseases, for support under my calamities and distresses I cannot dissemble my condition, I need not publish it, when addressing One who knows all things, to 'whom my very inward parts are naked and open, to Him who alone can give effectual relief to my sorrows and supply my crying necessities Thy wisdom knows what succours are most seasonable and proper for my circumstances, and how very slender and low my stock of virtue is.

Behold I stand before Thee a helpless creature, "miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and weak," imploring Thy grace, or at least some fragments of it, to this hungry, starving beggar. O let me not be famished, but revive this sinking wretch

with some crumbs of heavenly sustenance Let me not perish with cold, but warm me with Thy love, let me not fall into the pit, but enlighten my blind eyes with the shine of Thy gracious presence Give me a settled disclish of worldly pleasures, and make all, here below, insipid and bitter to me Reconcile me to crosses and afflictions by submission and steady patience and lessen everything in this world, whether enjoyment or suffering by teaching me to despise and forget it

Raise my stupid heart upto heaven and settle my affections there that they may no longer wildly rove after the trifling objects of flesh and sense Let me henceforth take delight in nothing but Thee, not "spend my money and labour for that which is not bread" for, 'Thou alone art "meat indeed, and drink indeed, my love and joy, my delight and exceeding great reward, my perfect and sole good'

O that, now I am approaching the throne of grace, Thou wouldst command 'Thy divine fire to descend from heaven into my soul' O that my sins and corrupt dispositions might be the burnt-offering consumed by it, that it might flame and burn and melt me down, purge away all my dross, and by the violence of its powerful heat, refine and change and incorporate me with Thyself' Let me not, I beseech Thee, be sent empty away let me not return hungry and thirsty from so splendid an entertainment, but work in me mightily, and deal bountifully with Thy

servant, as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy name I hope to find a wondrous alteration, and cannot think it strange if I feel my benumbed heart all sublimated when I come to that fire which ever burns without consuming, or if I find an entire separation of all my worldly and gross affections when heated thoroughly with that love, whose excellence it is to purify the heart by the activity, and to enlighten blind understandings by the brightness of its flame

THE END

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১। এই ব্লিপ ছিঁড়িলে বা নষ্ট করিলে এক আনা কাছিন দিতে হইবে।

২। পূর্বে স্থানি <sup>১</sup> সপ্তাহের মধ্যে ফেরৎ দিতে হইবে।  
২ সপ্তাহের

৩। পুস্তক কোন লাগ দেওয়া কুঅভ্যাস।







